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SUBJECT: SURINAME FAVORS A MEANINGFUL DECLARATION AT THE SPECIAL SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

REF: STATE 443

Classified By: Ambassador Marsha E Barnes; reason 1.5 (b) and (d).

Summary

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1. (C) Surinamese Foreign Minister Levens told the Ambassador January 5 that Suriname supports the US vision for a meaningful declaration at the Monterey Special Summit of the Americas, which Surinamese President Venetiaan will attend. In addition to firm commitments with firm time frames, Levens hoped the declaration would take into account the difficulties smaller nations have implementing all their commitments due the smaller sizes of their bureaucracies. In other matters discussed, Levens told the Ambassador that Suriname opposes St. Kitts/Nevis succession because it would result in two unthinkably small countries. Levens noted the need for Suriname to improve controls of its borders in order to better combat trafficking in persons. She did not respond to the Ambassador's inquiry regarding the status of the Suriname's response to the US request for an Article 98 agreement. Levens did mention, however, that the Embassy should soon receive the options Suriname will put forward for improving the Embassy's security setback. End Summary.

Summit of the Americas

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2. (C) The Ambassador met Surinamese Foreign Minister Maria Levens January 5 and made reftel points on the need to produce a meaningful declaration at the Special Summit of the Americas. Referring to A/S Noriega's letter to Surinamese Ambassador Illes (copied was provided to the Ministry December 30), the Ambassador stressed the need for a focused declaration that contains specific action items with specific time frames. She asked for Suriname's help to achieve firm commitments in four key areas: (a) transparency/anti-corruption; (b) investment in human capital, especially in education and on HIV/AIDS; (c) economic development as the key driving force to reduce poverty, highlighting the roles that FTAA and investment can play; and (d) explicit mention of the September 11 terrorist attacks and subsequent efforts to make the Western Hemisphere safe. The Ambassador noted that this will be the first meeting of all Western Hemisphere leaders since September 11 and pointed out that the President is looking forward to the discussions at Monterey, which will demonstrate continued US engagement in the hemisphere.

3. (C) Levens responded that Suriname supports the US vision of a concrete declaration at Monterey. She said she had spoken about the US vision with at least one CARICOM colleague and that CARICOM was working on the draft of the Declaration with an eye to making sure it contained clear commitments. Levens mentioned that the CARICOM was working on the draft declaration on behalf of the entire community.

4. (C) Levens noted the draft Declaration already had many commitments and stressed it was also important to focus on execution of these commitments. To that end, the Declaration needed to address the special problems faced by smaller countries, according to Levens. She explained that, while the smaller countries have the same number of commitments to implement, they oftentimes have much smaller bureaucracies on which to rely to get the job done. Smaller countries are often behind the larger countries in meeting their commitments, she continued, but it is not a question of support for those commitments, but rather a question of size, and "size matters." The Ambassador expressed her sympathy for the plight of the smaller countries and noted that this was one reason, among others, that the US has sought to reduce the number of resolution being considered at the UN.

5. (C) Levens confirmed that Surinamese President Venetiaan will attend the Monterey summit and expressed hope that the summit would "bring back proof of cooperation". She explained that there were too many tensions among countries in the region and that it was hard for Suriname to work in this environment. Levens lamented that Suriname is often seen as a South American country, but participated as a Caribbean country in most fora. This places Suriname uncomfortably between CARICOM and MERCOSUR. She noted that

Suriname has little contact with Central American nations, Mexico or Canada, but agreed with the Ambassador that Suriname played a special role vis-a-vis Brazil and that contact with the rest of South American was much better.

St. Kitts/Nevis

16. (C) Following up on the Minister's comments about the problems of small countries, the Ambassador asked Levens for Suriname's position on St. Kitts/Nevis secession, stressing US concerns for the future of such small countries should secession occur. Levens replied that Suriname supported the CARICOM position, which made clear that it would be better for secession not to occur, which would result in two unthinkably small countries.

Article 98

17. (C) The Ambassador reminded Levens that the US still awaited a response to our request for an Article 98 agreement, highlighting the recent comments by CARICOM's Carrington on the compatibility of an Article 98 agreements and support for the ICC. Levens did not respond.

TIP

18. (C) The Ambassador expressed her concern that Suriname needed to continue to make efforts to combat Trafficking in Persons. Levens responded that Suriname's biggest problem in this regard is controlling its borders, which are too long and remote. She told the Ambassador that she has urged Minister of Justice/Police Gilds to work closely with his Defense Ministry counterpart to develop effective border controls that would prevent trafficking in persons. She noted that she believed that Suriname has an effective method of controlling entries and exits from its international airport. (Comment. It is unclear whether Levens' remarks continue to reflect her previously expressed confusion about the difference between trafficking in persons and alien smuggling. End Comment.)

Road Setback

19. (C) Levens told the Ambassador that the Embassy should hear from the Ministry of Public Works possibly later this week concerning options on the Embassy's request for realignment of the road in front of the Embassy to improve the Embassy's security setback.

BARNES

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